
THE
NIGHTINGALE.

"THE LEAST, THE LOVELIEST OF THE TUNEFUL TRAIN."

No. X.—TUESDAY, MAY 31st, '96.

THE THEORIST:

No. V.

Oh ! I will love thee, even in madness love thee ;
'Tho' my distracted senses should forsake me,
I'd find some intervals, when my poor heart
Should 'swage itself, and be let loose to thine.

Venice Preserv'd.

IN the catalogue of passions which govern the conduct of mankind, and bear an impetuous sway over the remonstrances of reason, none perhaps is more notoriously complicated in its nature, and deeply penetrable in its effects, than Love. Few of either sex attain the period of maturity unsusceptible of its influence, and there are none, however callous to delicate sensibility, who do not at some part of their lives, experience a superficial cognoscence of its power ; and every individual, though in a measure insensible to the soft glances of a woman, does at a certain season, conceive a violent impulse that dictates solicitude towards a particular object, which, for a while destroys self anxiety, and extirpates every sinister principle ; his whole attention is absorbed in seeking new supplies of grati-

cation, in discovering fresh novelties, and industriously studying that which will enliven the pleasure, and increase the happiness of her, for whom he indulges an infinite preference.

Sensations resulting from the exercise of this passion, are not always exempt from poignancy ; in the heat of fervency, and summit of expectation, when grace and beauty rest upon our minds ;—when contemplating every constituent of those charms with which we are captivated ; desire and rapture enthusiastically seize our senses, and subdue the efforts of reason ; it is in these paroxysms of eagerness, that jealousy, that hydra of tortures, intrudes her hideous visage ; that suspicion usurps the helm, and like a tyranness dooms us her groveling vassals. Thus circumstanced, we purchase our own calamity, by precipitate conclusions, endure wretchedness which moderation might have escaped, and possess prejudices which temperature and calmness would have prevented.

Notwithstanding the multiplicity of evils to which Love subjects us, its enjoyments and advantages far preponderate : when propitiously directed towards an amiable and worthy object, inheriting similarity of disposition, and unison of mind, when it is interwoven with mutual congeniality, and maintained by reciprocal friendship, no situation can superceed its luxuriance, or emanate more refulgent felicity.

The subversions of fortune, unfavourable disappointment, and severe attacks of grief ;—events in themselves highly discouraging, sufficient to impair the most vigorous fortitude, and debilitate the most unshaken inflexibility, are mitigated and healed by the cheering sympathy of united fondness, and ample sincerity. When care and unhappy vicissitude diffuse over the mind melancholy reflection, or any fortuitous occurrence obtrudes, repugnant to our peace, we are not compelled to the hard fate of so-

litary affliction, but in the bosom of connatal love, discover a resort heavenly assuasive: by its glowing ardor and extensive concord, the landscape of life is chequered with variegated beauty; it eradicates every noxious weed, and dissipates every dismal appearance.

Milton in his elegant poem of *Paradise Lost*, very finely describes the passion upon which I am now descanting; every scene through which the first pair passed, was rendered increasingly fascinating by the company of each other;—masculine authority appeared super-majestic in contrast with feminine softness, and the attractions of the female, heightened to an exquisite degree by the firmness and solidity which distinguished the countenance of the man.

When we view domestic life in all its fruition, it exhibits a condition as perfect and unmingled, as fancy can portray, or the prolific source of imagination comprehend. For my own part, I have never yet advanced over the threshold of Hymen, inexperience therefore may have lulled my ideas into a fictitious slumber, and taught expectation, more than reality confirms; yet my sentiments will retain their originality, confident, that though pecuniary inducements may terminate in disquietude and misery; an exchanged attachment, destitute of emolumentary considerations, and fabricated on disinterested principles, must naturally produce perpetuity of delight, and incessant tranquility.

Origin of the Phrase, "*To bring a thing on the Carpet.*"

AT Vincennes, in France, there is, or at least was an oak, under which Louis the IXth used to administer justice to his subjects, at a table covered with a carpet—whence came the French phrase, "*Mettre un chose sur le tapis*"—"To propose a thing, or lay it upon the carpet."

Literary Amusements.

[SELECTED.]

ESSAY ON SHAKSPEARE.

IT appears paradoxical, but it is strictly true, that the faults of Shakespear, great and numerous as his warmest advocates must allow them to be, afford the most decisive proofs of his excellence. It is an acknowledged fact, that to his works all classes of men, the young and the old, the learned and the ignorant, the clown and the courtier, are indebted for the most exquisite entertainment and delight; and yet, what rule of composition can be named which he has not violated; what species of impropriety, from which he is entirely exempt? How transcendent, then, must be the merit of that writer, how striking the lustre of those beauties, which have power to excite such delightful emotions, under such disadvantages, and combined with such defects? It is a subject of liberal curiosity to enquire into the nature of those beauties, and in what manner they concur, to produce this extraordinary effect. Much has been said, and much been done by critics of the first eminence in order to illustrate those points, but I am of opinion that it will ever remain in some degree a mystery, why one writer pleases above all others. I believe it requires a much more intimate acquaintance with the human mind than the acutest philosopher can boast, to be able to trace the origin and progress of all those associations which contribute to the formation of pleasureable ideas. We know, indeed, from experience, that the observation of certain long established rules of composition pleases in a certain degree: and we account tolerably, upon philosophical principles, for the pleasure we derive from those sources: but unfortunately for the lovers of system, Shakespear has dared to please in con-

tradition to rules, and that in a much higher degree than the most admired writers who have adhered to them. For I think it will be acknowledged, that even the *Cædipus* and *Iphigenia* of Sophocles and Euripides are inferior to *Lear* and *Othello*, in regard to the general effect of the composition; and to put the *Cid* and *Athalie*, those chef d'œuvres of the French theatre, in competition with Shakespeare, is, as it were, to bring Paris into the lists to encounter Ajax or Achilles. Without pretending to enter very deeply into the subject, I shall offer a few remarks, such as occur to me, on the causes of this evident and prodigious superiority; or, in other words, I propose to point out some of those characteristic beauties which predominate in the works of Shakespeare, and which appear to me to constitute their principal excellence: and perhaps, the most striking feature appertaining to them is this, "that they strongly arrest the attention."—Our curiosity is powerfully excited at the commencement of each piece, and it is never suffered to subside till the conclusion of it: this is the most infallible test and proof of genius. Many of our modern tragedies, it must be acknowledged, are regular and faultless performances; some of them are not only free from material defects, but possess a considerable share of real excellence; for instance, *Cato*, *Irene*, and *Phædra* and *Hyppolitus*. The diction of these plays is lofty and poetical, without being inflated; the sentiments just and noble, the plots regularly conducted, the characters skillfully diversified, and the unities strictly preserved. What can be wanting then to the perfection of tragedy? I know not; but this I know, that these tragedies, and such as these, I read without emotion or sympathy, with a certain sensation of pleasure indeed, but so weak as scarcely to induce me to take up the performance a second time, except it may be for the purpose of committing a few splendid passages to memory. They are defective in that first and greatest power of composition, the power of seizing, fascinating, and enchanting the attention: In a word, they are defective in genius, a term equally impossible to mistake or to define. On the contrary, I am still unable to read *Lear*, *Macbeth*

or Othello, often as I have perused them, without the strongest emotions; not of admiration, for I have not leisure to admire till I have laid down the book—but of pity, terror, indignation, solicitude, and sorrow; but is there not a sufficient quantum of distress and misfortune to produce these effects in our modern dramas? Distresses and misfortunes there are in abundance, certainly, but so perverse is my disposition, that where the poet is most inclined to be serious, I am often most disposed to be merry. I am as void of compassion as Launce's dog Crab. "I think," says he, "Crab, my dog, be the fourest-natured dog that lives; my mother weeping, my father wailing, my sister crying, our maid howling, our cat wringing her hands, and all our house in great perplexity, yet did not this cruel-hearted cur shed one tear." But not to dwell any longer on this obscure and general cause of the superiority of Shakespeare above all other dramatic writers, I believe it will be universally allowed, that his skill in discriminating, and his attention to the preservation of his characters, constitute a distinguished branch of his superior excellence. It is true, that in many other productions of the drama we meet with characters natural and consistent, conceived with judgment and sustained with propriety; but the characters of Shakespeare are drawn with such surprising force, as well as propriety and truth, that we can scarcely forbear to consider them as originals actually in existence. Many scenes are penned with such an air of animation, of nature and reality, that one is almost tempted to suppose that the poet had, like Bayes, overheard the dialogue which he gives us as his own invention. Such is the scene in which Hamlet is first informed of the appearance of his father's ghost; such the garden scene in Romeo and Juliet; and such the scene in which Iago first awakens the jealousy of Othello; and such an hundred others. The characters of Shakespeare, also, are not only drawn with force and correctness, but many of them are of a very uncommon and original cast.—Such as Falstaff, Polonius, Jacques, Menenius, &c. Characters like these require the utmost care and delicacy in the execution, and afford the highest degree of entertainment when touched by the hand of a master; they are not so much close and exact copies of nature, as bold

imitations; they are not, perhaps, such characters as do exist, but when once invented, such as might easily be supposed to exist. We perceive that they are so constructed as to display the most perfect knowledge of the human mind; that the component parts of these characters are strictly consonant to those ideas of truth and nature which we find in our own breasts; but the combination is wholly new. Who will venture to assert, that the character of Falstaff is unnatural; but, if we look into real life, where shall a Falstaff be found? it was to be found in the inexhaustible imagination of Shakespeare only;—though so exquisite is the workmanship of this “journeyman of nature,” that it would scarcely seem hyperbolical and extravagant to say, with the poet,

“Nature herself, amaz’d, may doubting stand

“Which is her own, and which the painter’s hand.”

It is further observable, that in characters of the same class, we find the nicest and most curious shades of discrimination.—The heroines of Corneille are all of a family; but if we survey with attention the characters of Desdemona, of Imogen, of Ophelia, of Juliet, &c. all innocent and amiable, we perceive that each has her peculiar traits, which distinguish her from the rest: Juliet has not the artlessness and simplicity of Desdemona; Imogen has not the courage and resolution of Juliet; Ophelia has not the tender delicate affection of Imogen; nor Desdemona the filial piety of Ophelia. Another remarkable circumstance relating to this astonishing preservation of character is, that he is always careful to imitate, and not merely to describe, the feelings and passions of the different personages of the drama: the distinction between imitation and description has been well illustrated by Lord Kains; and it is certain, that nothing less than a genuine expression of passion can awaken the attention or sympathy of the spectator. Shakespeare deals very little in loose and unmeaning declamation: in trying and critical situations, we have usually the language of nature bursting from the heart; or if he fails, it is not by falling into the undramatical and uninteresting language of description, but into sentiments too much laboured, harsh or unreasonable metaphors, or quaint and far-fetched conceits. Othello, when perfectly convinced of the falsehood of Desdemo-

na and the treachery of Cassio, thus exclaims, in the most perfect imitation of passion that can be conceived :

Oth. Oh ! that the slave had forty thousand lives ;

One is too poor, too weak for my revenge !

Now do I see tis true.—Look here, Iago ;

All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven :

'Tis gone.—

Arise, black Vengeance, from thy hollow cell !

Yield up, O Love, thy crown and hearted throne

To tyrannous Hate ! swell, bosom, with thy fraught,

For 'tis of aspicks tongues !

Iago. Yet be content.

Oth. Oh ! blood, blood, blood.

Iago. Patience, I say ; your mind, perhaps, may change.

But here the language of imitation changes to that of description :

Oth. Never, Iago : Like to the Pontick sea,

Whose icy current and compulsive course

Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on

To the Propontick, and the Hellespont ;

Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,

Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,

'Till that a capable and wide revenge

Swallow them up.

Beautiful as this comparison is, we feel the impropriety of it in the situation and circumstances of the speaker ; this is a remarkable deviation from Shakespeare's usual mode of writing : but if we look into modern plays, and into the works of the French dramatists, we shall find imitation of passion scarcely attempted, and description every where prevalent.

The next remarkable characteristic of this great poet which offers itself to notice is, the beauty and energy of his diction. It is now two hundred years since he commenced writer, and in this time his language has acquired a certain obsolete cast, an air of antiquity, which it must be owned is of no advantage to his comedies, for the style of comedy should be always easy and familiar ; but which gives to his tragic compositions an inexpressible grace and dignity. This is a species of excellence which modern writers cannot even attempt, without falling into a sort of literary mimicry which is productive of a very ludicrous effect, as the tragedies of Cumberland fully evince. The beautiful concluding lines of Dryden's epistle to Kneller, are as applicable to the art of po-

etry as to that of painting; and it might have been as truly predicted of the works of a Shakespeare, as of those of a Raffaele.

More cannot be by mortal art express,
But venerable age shall add the rest.
For Time shall with his ready pencil stand,
Retouch your figures with his rip'ning hand.
Mellow your colours, and imbrown the teint;
Add every grace, which Time alone can grant;
To future ages shall your fame convey,
And give more beauties than he takes away.

It cannot however be doubted, but that the style and diction of Shakespeare must have originally possessed merit of the highest kind; the most forcible as well as the most beautiful combination of words which the English language affords, are to be found in his works. Where, in the whole range of modern poetry, do we meet with such powers of expression as the following passages exhibit, which, on the casual opening of a volume almost immediately present themselves.

All those which were his fellows but of late,
Some better than his value, on the moment
Follow his strides; his lobbies fill with tendance,
Rain sacrificial whispering in his ear.

——Who dares, who dares,
In purity of manhood stand upright,
And say, This man's a flatterer? If one be,
So are they all; for every grize of fortune
Is smooth'd by that below: the learned pate
Ducks to the golden fool: all is oblique;—

——Here's gold; go on;——
Be as a planetary plague, when Jove
Will o'er some high-vic'd city hang his poison
In the sick air.

——What! think'st thou
That the black air, thy boist'rous chamberlain,
Will put thy shirt on warm? Will these moss'd trees,
That have out-liv'd the eagle, page thy heels;
And skip when thou point'st out? Will the cold brook,
Candy'd with ice, candle thy morning taste,
To cure thy o'er-night's surfeit? Call the creatures,
Whose naked natures live in all the spite
Of wreakful heaven; whose bare unhoufed trunks,
To the conflicting elements expos'd,

Answer mere nature—bid them flatter thee ;
Oh, thou shalt find——

——Oh ! dear divorce [looking on the gold,]
'Twixt natural son and fire ! thou bright defiler
Of Hymen's purest bed ! thou valiant Mars !
Thou ever young, fresh, lov'd, and delicate wooer,
Whose blush doth thaw the consecrated snow
That lies on Dian's lap ! thou visible god,
That folder'st close impossibilities,
And mak'st them kifs ; that speak'st with every tongue,
To every purpose ! oh thou touch of hearts,
Think, thy slave man rebels ; and by thy virtue
Set them into confounding odds, that beasts
May have the world in empire !—&c. &c.

Timon of Athens.

(Concluded in our next.)

Poetry.

ODE TO EVENING.

BY DR. JOSEPH WARTON.

HAIL, meek-ey'd maiden, clad in sober grey !
Whose soft approach the weary woodman loves ;
As homeward bent to kiss his prattling babes,
Jocund, he whistles thro' the twilight groves.

When Phœbus sinks behind the western hills,
You lightly o'er the misty meadows walk,
The drooping daisies bath in dulcet dew,
And nurse the nodding violet's tender stalk.

The panting Dryads, that in days fierce heat,
To inmost bowers and cooling caverns ran ;
Return to trip in wanton ev'ning dance,
Old Sylvan too returns, and laughing Pan.

To the deep wood the clam'rous rooks repair,
Light skims the swallow o'er the wat'ry scene ;
And from the sheep-cote and fresh furrow'd field,
Stout plowmen meet to wrestle on the green.

The swain that artless sings on yonder rock,
 His supping sheep and length'ning shadow spics,
 Pleas'd with the cool, the calm refreshing hour,
 And with hoarse hummings of unnumber'd flies.

Now every passion sleeps : desponding Love,
 And pining Envy, ever restless Pride ;
 An holy calm creeps o'er my peaceful soul,
 Anger and mad Ambition's storms subside.

O modest Evening ! oft let me appear
 A wand'ring votary in thy pensive train ;
 List'ning to every wildly-warbling note,
 That fills with farewell sweet thy dark'ning plain !

LEVI TIES.

*Account of the Imitative Faculty in a Horse : From a
 Tour through France, in 1788.*

ON setting off from Rouen, I found myself provided with a pretty gray bidet, and a postilion, in favour of whom I was somewhat prepossessed, being the smartest of any I had met with, dressed in a new royal livery of blue, with red and gold, and a waistcoat finely fringed.

I mounted my nag, with no small degree of self-satisfaction ; when, giving him the whip, I discovered that the only quality he had of going, was that of moving backwards, as he began to kick behind most furiously, to the great derangement, and endangering of my person ; being obliged to have recourse to his mane, in order to keep my seat, on account of the huge and ill-shaped wooden saddle I was mounted on. At length I found the only way to manage him was, to let him follow his companion ; the postilion then cracked his whip, galloped away

as fast as he could go and my horse after him ; and so exactly did he follow, step by step, that when the postilion's horse galloped, mine galloped ; when his trotted, walked, or stood still, mine corresponded in every movement ; till, by the time I had proceeded half a mile from the town, I found myself covered all over with dirt from head to foot, which flew from the heels of the other horse. At length, when we had got about a mile from Rouen, as we were cantering over the pave, the postillion's horse made a false step, and dashed with great violence on the ground ; the rider tumbled off, and the horse rolled upon his huge jack-boot. My bidet, who followed close behind, was so strongly addicted to the vice of imitation, that without any visible cause whatever, he immediately stopped short, and tumbled down upon the other, with an apparent voluntary motion, we were all four rolling together in the most ludicrous situation imaginable ; a situation, that, at the moment, I wished for that prince of caricature, Geoffrey Gambado, to have been present at.

A STUDENT of the Law having applied for admission to practice in a court, the Judges appointed two respectable Counsellors to examine him, one of whom was a man of more humour, and less abilities than the other, and was the oldest at the bar. The youth of course waited on him first. The old gentleman addressing him as was his manner, ore rotundo, said, " Pray, Sir, if a client were to apply to you to commence a suit for him, what is the first thing you ought to do ? " " To receive my Fee, Sir " replied the youth, keeping a steady countenance. " Very well Mr.—, very well, replied the counsellor, " I see you have a good knowledge of the practice, you may now go to brother—, naming the other Counsellor, " and he will examine you touching the weightier matters of the law."